

## A Diaconate Training Course

Now and then we hear of the "discovery of the deacon." Ever and anon from church courts and conventions and in published articles rings forth the cheering news that this valuable officer has been "discovered," the vital character of his duties realized and the necessity for his being made acquainted with his responsibility and privilege proclaimed.

Then the deacon himself sinks back into "innocuous desuetude." Like the hedgehog, he comes forth into the broad sunlight of the announcement, sees his shadow and retires for another long sleep.

Most of us recognize the fact that at the root of the church's inadequate support of its benevolent causes lies the inactivity of the deacon. But this much-abused official is not wholly at fault, for, in many cases, ignorance of his exalted duties has tied his hands, and he has been overshadowed by the session, or by improvised committees, and lost to view.

Whose fault it is that such a condition exists makes not so profitable a discussion as what effective remedy may be applied.

We have spent enough effort already in "discovering" a defect and endeavoring to locate the blame. We need some constructive (or reconstructive) thinking.

Here is a remarkably practical suggestion as to the remedy, offered by Dr. J. B. Hutton, of Jackson, Miss., which is well worth the careful consideration of all earnest seekers who are both working and praying to the end that the Church may measure up to her present incomparable opportunity at home and abroad.

It would be a happy sequence if a special text-book should be prepared for use in a "diaconal study class."

### The Extension of God's Kingdom.

**The Work and the Agent:** The functions of the church, as a kingdom and government distinct from the civic commonwealth, are to proclaim, to administer and to enforce the law of Christ revealed in the Scriptures. The church, with its ordinances, officers and courts, is the agency which Christ has ordained for the edification and government of his people for the propagation of the faith and for the evangelization of the world." Form of government, articles 17-18.

The officers on whom he has placed the responsibility of arranging the financial affairs of the kingdom, the offering for pious uses, are the deacons. Form of government, articles 23-47, Acts 6:3. Our book provides for their election, ordination, installation; sets forth their qualifications and prescribes their duties. Form of government, articles, 23, 28, 33, 46-49, 112, 1 Timothy, 3:8-13. Yet there seems to be ever a tendency to discount the dignity and worth of this office on which the Bible places special honor, and which is set forth in the confession as perpetual in the church. The beloved Dr. Thomas E. Peck rendered the church invaluable service in rescuing this office from its approaching extinction through disuse. His defense of the office is preserved to us in chapter 19, "The Deacon's Office," in his Ecclesiology. We believe in the communion of saints. The office of the deacon and the Lord's Supper are the two ordinances emphatically denominated by the word communion.

### Some Widely Prevailing Sentiments As to the Deacon.

First. Men with meager spirituality, consecration and faith, will do for the diaconate, but not for the eldership. This could hardly have its source in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

Second. The almost universal testimony is that the weakest point in the church is to be found in the diaconate. "Our Committee of Home and Foreign Missions and Education are but great central deaconships of charitable ministrations." (Ramsay quoted in Peck's Ecclesiology, page 209).

The Confession, rightly interpreting the Bible, places the gathering of the offering in the hands of the deacons, and the church halts today more for lack of money than lack of men. How much would it mean to our Assembly's executive committees if they could meet and pray and plan, knowing that the deacons in their respective churches would place at their disposal means adequate to carrying on the work of the kingdom! How many pastors, called to have hearts free from worldly cares and avocations, whose scant salaries are irregularly paid!

Third. That the pastor should not direct or lead the deacons, lest he be suspected of serving for money.

Fourth. The many expedients resorted to, with partial success for a season, in order to replenish the treasury of the church, cannot be accepted as a permanent basis for financing the affairs of his kingdom.

### What is the Cause of This Failure in the Deacon's Work?

#### There May Be Many Causes; We Suggest One and the Remedy Thereof.

First. Christ did not make a mistake in establishing the church as his agency in the earth for extending his kingdom.

Second. The saint, or Christian, can find no better agency through which to give than the church. The church can find no better agency to gather and dispense the gifts than her authorized officers.

Third. The weakness in the diaconate is not due to a lack of talent. Most of the men now in the eldership were once deacons, and as a class were no more efficient deacons than we now have.

Fourth. The failure, so far as the diaconate is concerned, is due in a large measure to lack of leadership and training. The session in the church without a pastor, as a rule, meets as irregularly and is as weak as the diaconate. The cause we have assigned is lack of training and leadership.

#### The Remedy.

Let every pastor conduct a training course for the deacons. Let the course embrace the following and like subjects:

- I. The nature of the office (see Confession and Form of Government and Peck's Ecclesiology).
- II. The qualifications of the officers as to character. (1 Timothy, 3:8-13.)
- III. Official qualifications.
  1. A vision of the dignity and worth of the office—Secretary of Finance for his King.
  2. Definite information, the news and possibilities of the work—at home and abroad.
  3. The Bible conception of Christian stewardship.
  4. Sympathy for and interest in the cause.
  5. The spirit of sacrifice in service.
  6. A willingness to do his best.
  7. Prayer as the source of power for service.
- IV. Method.
  1. A division of labor.
  2. A definite time, given to the work.

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3. A definite form for report as to work.
4. A definite time at which to make report.
5. United prayer by all the deacons before beginning the work that they may go conscious of the fact that they are going for Christ, and therefore go in his spirit.

Is there any reason why the pastor should not train for this great work the men whom God has called through the voice of the church, and whom the church ordained to office?

Unquestionably, faithful work in training the diaconate will count mightily for the kingdom's spread. Two study classes are needed in every church—first, a class in personal evangelism, primarily the work of the session; second, a class in Christian stewardship, primarily the work of the deacons.—Missionary Survey.

### MOUNTAIN DORMITORIES FURNISHED.

It is exceedingly gratifying to learn that the account of our work published in the church papers, entitled "Many Mountain Missions" has attracted such wide attention, and awakened such special interest throughout the church.

Many are becoming interested in the new dormitories built at Heidelberg, Highland College, and Stuart Robinson Memorial at Blackey, Ky. All three are two-story buildings, containing in the aggregate seventy-two rooms, and cost each about \$2,500. The statement was made that friends of Home Missions had furnished the funds for the building, but we had no means for furnishing these rooms, which would require from \$15 to \$20 each.

Already we are having a good response from Christian friends, and the following have taken Memorial rooms:

Richland Church, S. C. ....	\$ 15 00
Messrs. W. & W. ....	15 00
Guthrie Church, Ky. ....	20 00
Miss A. M. C. ....	60 00
Miss J. G. C. ....	20 00
A Friend, Frierson Memorial Room ....	20 00
North Avenue Missionary Society ....	15 00
Miss Nella C. Moss ....	20 00
Mrs. E. M. Goodridge ....	20 00

Total .....\$205 00

This provides for about a dozen rooms, but there are sixty left and there is "room" for additional Memorials. The three institutions have a total attendance at present of 400, and when the dormitories are furnished we will be able to accommodate over one hundred additional boarders. We trust that our friends will continue their response until these dormitories are furnished. It will require but a small investment to bring Christian education within the reach of these promising young people now waiting for a chance.

S. L. Morris,  
Secretary.

### WHERE CHRISTIANITY COMES IN.

S. H. Chester.

The death grapple in which so many of the nominally Christian nations are now locked, and the fearful carnage that is now taking place along their battle lines, is proclaimed by many as a demonstration that Christianity is a failure. The truth is that the Christian name has carried a handicap which it should not have carried for centuries in allowing nations to be called Christian nations simply because the Christian church is found in them in organized form. In each of these warring nations there exists to-day a true Christian church, composed of those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and have experienced the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. It is comforting and encouraging to see how this true Christian element is asserting itself at the present time.

There are about 800 German missionaries now working in countries that are under British rule and who are thus almost entirely cut off from contact with their home base. Not only is this true, but it is also true that the ability of the German churches to support these 800 missionaries will probably be entirely destroyed while the war lasts. Almost every able-bodied man in Germany will be called to military service, and productive labor will be almost entirely confined to the women and children. In view of this condition of affairs it is most encouraging to find that the Standing Committee of the Conference of British Missionary Societies has inaugurated a movement for raising a fund for the temporary support of the German Missions in British territory. This is one place where Christianity comes in. Some one has already opened the fund with a gift of \$1,000, and steps are being taken to ascertain whether the missionary societies in this country will co-operate in the movement. As hard pressed as the American societies will be to support their own work while the war lasts, we trust that they will not refuse to lend a hand in this movement, and thus give a practical demonstration of the reality and power of the love which is able to transcend differences of nation and race.

The Edinburgh Missionary Conference taught the churches represented in it the great lesson of looking upon the missionary enterprise as one. The new international fellowship and co-operation which grew out of it has proved one of the greatest enrichments of our missionary work, and no occasion has ever arisen in the history of the church offering a grander opportunity than the present occasion offers to strengthen this international bond of brotherhood.

Not only the missions of the German churches, but those of the French churches also must be deprived of their support temporarily by the war. This makes it all the more urgent that our American churches should make

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